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calvert

The Gesture, the gesture, the gesture...

Sometime in late March, a babble of students who write frequently and have had their poetry published in calvert were asked by the editor to get together along with a tape recorder, some wine, and a suitably ill-lit room to discuss their one true love. Instead, something else happened.

Nonetheless, some of the dialogue should be of interest to people who write and read poetry, by way of comparing ideas. Some should be of assistance to those who want to get into what goes on in poetry, and the rest is for all you absurdity fans.

The main feeling among the participants was that the poem is the thing and any discussion of poetry is merely a sidelight, a mind-expanding device.

Finally, calvert recognizes the existence of many other poets we've published and not published besides the people in this discussion, which was conceived and executed in havoc. The participants were: Elizabeth Ayres, Hugh Brown, Don Cook, Mike Dolan, Meldon Hollis, Carolyn Jones, John Link, and Nancy Marks.

—john link

COOK: (doing Robert Frost) When I see birches bend from left to right...

(the wine arrives)

BROWN: Are you talking to someone?

COOK: Yes.

JONES: Who is it?

COOK: What?

JONES: What?

DOLAN: (answering phone) Yes. Who is it? Please speak into the tape recorder...

DOLAN: No.

DOLAN: No.

JONES: John, control it.

LINK: Yeah, ok. Ah, everybody quiet...

DOLAN: Control what?

BROWN: I'm going to recite "Mary had a little lamb...

JONES: Is that a poem? Is that a poem?

LINK: Nice try Carolyn.

DOLAN: Sneaky, but nice.

COOK: Mary had a little lamb/its fleece was white as snow/it followed her to school one day/and a big yellow dog killed it.

MARKS: Well the point of THAT poem...

(the sound of wine being poured)

DOLAN: Okay, we're gonna rap about poetry now...

LINK: The topic is how do a poem do it. How do it do it. How do it do it to you...

BROWN: To me a poem does it when it sparks a certain emotion. When I've experienced something emotionally, not necessarily what the poet was trying to get across...

JONES: Okay. Mary had a little lamb...

BROWN: I can't relate to that.

JONES: You just did.

COOK: Why bring the poet into it?

AYRES: When a poet writes, he has a specific goal in mind, either to make a specific message or to command a specific mood. The poet's effectiveness comes into it when you judge how well he is able to make you feel something.

COOK: Noooooo.

AYRES: Yeah, but does that mean that a poem that appeals to your emotions is not a poem?

BROWN: Poetry is an emotional genre. It has appeal to your emotions. There are degrees of emotional appeal, but I don't think...

In 19th century poetry, the poet took the reader by the hand and led him through a series of ideas and scenes. Whereas, in 20th century poetry, the poet is trying to make an environment, and make it stable and concrete enough so the reader can walk through it alone.

JONES: It has to appeal to your emotions? How do you separate emotions and intelligence?

LINK: You may not meet the totality of the poet, but in reading you're going to meet intensely, a fragment of his mind.

MARKS: No. I don't think you're going to meet a part of the poet or a part of the general consciousness. I think you're going to meet something in yourself—some part of *your* consciousness.

JONES: I think the poem is more personal than the person.

MARKS: What's it matter? It's a different kind of experience.

JONES: If I read a poem of yours, I think I would know you much better than if I met you.

When you talk about the experience of reading a poem, you're actually meeting a part of the writer.

MARKS: Yeah, I agree, but on a different side. I don't talk like that all the time.

JONES: But why is that a different side?

AYRES: A good poet is not black or white, man or woman...

BROWN: I don't think we really write the poems we write. I have an idea of a spirit that kind of lodges in our bodies and dictates to us. But the way we rearrange the thoughts, the craft, is what makes poems uniquely personal.

AYRES: I would call the spirit: Imagination.

MARKS: A poet has the ability to see in one moment, in one miniscule bit of reality, the universal...

BROWN: You've seen an experience.

COOK: I hope a poet is trying to create a depth and allowing the reader to move within this depth.

HOLLIS: You've got to have an ego problem or you can't be a good poet.

MARKS: The way I see it, there's a piece of poet in everybody...

COOK: I can't go along with that.

LINK: Okay. Part of the poet is sensitivity and part is craft. The sensitivity is in everyone. It is that which is organized by craft that makes poetry.

COOK: That makes poetry and paintings and architecture...

AYRES: Are you saying that anyone given the proper push and instruction could turn into a poet?

The writer is completely extraneous to the poem.

BROWN: The potential is in everyone.

MARKS: And a poet is conscious of words...as a painter is conscious of forms. Everyone is creative in his own way.

COOK: There is a theory of D.H. Lawrence's that all men are not equal: but all men are other things.

MARKS: What are we disagreeing about?

AYRES: We've got to disagree.

DOLAN: I think the whole thing's become a bit esoteric...

JONES: Okay. Let's bring it back down.

DOLAN: How was a poem do?

MARKS: You've got a basic problem with your individuality.

COOK: Yeah, I like it.

JONES: I don't care if you disagree or not, this is my opinion.

HOLLIS: ...and it's wrong...

LINK: Say some old lady plants a garden in her backyard; then she is utilizing what is poetry in other people.

COOK: No she's not. She's planting a garden in her backyard.

LINK: So how do you judge a good poem?
MARKS: If I read it and the next five minutes I can't do anything else.
BROWN: Is there a way to get away from emotion when you read a poem?
COOK: If a poet wishes to do an emotional poem, he's got to build an emotional world through craft. But that's not necessarily the only type of poem to write.
LINK: What are other types?
COOK: Well, emotion is just one facet of existence. I think you could write a poem about anything.
LINK: There is no poem that you can write that won't bring about an emotional response.
AYRES: What's an emotional response? You can't read anything without one. What if you can't name the emotion?
MARKS: I think that any poem that dictates an emotion isn't working at all. A truth is not gonna hold any emotion. Emotion is not the most important thing in a poem.
HOLLIS: A good poem is something that makes people react without you trying to determine how they react. I don't think you have that right.
DOLAN: I think, that if you get an emotional experience that the poet wasn't aiming for, then the poem is not successful.

COOK: Now, I hate to bring up a high school thing...but a poem should not mean but beeeeee....
BROWN: For me there is no being without truth and no truth without being.
COOK: Yeah, but a poem iiisssssss.
DOLAN: Is it were? Have It Been? DID IT WAS?
MARKS: So what? Every poem exists on a page. Does that poem be? All you're saying is a poem is a poem is a poem.
COOK: But everything on the page has to make something exist that is equal to your own physical existence.
MARKS: Well, isn't that piece of paper with those shitty words written on it, isn't that existing?
COOK: No.
JONES: Don's talking about a good poem.
BROWN: How do you distinguish a half-ass poem from any other poem?
COOK: A half-ass poem isn't being.
BROWN: You have to qualify that.
COOK: Okay...wouldn't you say that if somebody writes a poem and that poem, because of thought and good craft, makes what's in the poem real, then that's a good poem?
MARKS: What are we disagreeing about?
AYRES: We've got to disagree.

LINK: How about this—a poem has to make love to you?
JONES: Make love to you?
LINK: That when two people make love, they reach a state of being, like a poem and its reader.
MARKS: Then there's not the poem and there's not you, but there's some being in between the two.
LINK: Then a poem with bad craft is a bad sex partner. It's like fucking a whore.
AYRES: Whores have good craft.

Some whores have good craft.

JONES: Don, what makes your poems unique?
COOK: I'm writing them.

BROWN: Can a drunk appreciate a poem if he can't understand the words?
HOLLIS: He's got the same ability to appreciate beauty as you do. Don't get into the bag of deciding what's superior and inferior. Don't try to impose your value system on someone else.
BROWN: Well, say I use the word "ambiguous" in a poem; he can't understand it.
HOLLIS: You keep talkin' as if you have the value system. The fallacy is that this guy reads your poem and you use "ambiguous" and a couple of other way out words and he looks at it and says "Bullshit." All the cat's ever done is sat on the corner and drank wine, and you say, "Well, you don't understand the words" and he says, "It's still bullshit." And what if his response is "It's not important to understand the words. It's a bunch of bullshit because I can't understand the words!"?
BROWN: Then whose fault is it?
HOLLIS: I'm asking you.

A dream of hands

third day in the trap
the cat becomes still,
his oil circle shoulders withered down
in the foodless fire of his belly.

with broken leg planted in the marsh
he begins his day and moon coma
eyes cloud
and his motion centers in raveling dream
a cat cream of hands
the sun offering of his body unto night

and being just out of life until morning
eased back into light's heated cushion

in a spool of rimmed echoes
he rides three times the cycle
moondeath sunlife

day in the dance of old hunts
and death, the seventh day sun's offering
of the steel shaken cat.

—david tanner

The shaggy

"A shaggy" says Reed Whittemore, "is a poem written in pidgin English about some subject of which the poet has grown tired. It is also an excellent remedy for temporary inability to poeticize." As the inventor of the genre, Mr. Whittemore should know.

Changem system shaggy

Who know when happy day come of ze collidge free?
Tomorrow mebbe? Mebbe not.
First buildem heap big hot plate for ze faculty,
Then give ze students buckshot,

Und schrifft ein grosso epic of heap human rights,
Inglooming men und femmes und childs und spades,
Und stomp on prexy's lawn und smashem lights,
Und macht ein machty zowie fur no grades.

All done? Non. Still ze problem iss vass happen
When glorious freewheel collidge open.

—reed whittemore

Revolutionary shaggy

When vater of our patrie row ze Delaware,
He meet nize rich Duponts, and kiss and hollah,
And rentem guns and pop ze British rear,
And win ze country for ze U S dollah.

So start up corp in Delaware, and glue
Himself upon ze dollah, and buildem city
Washington (Himself) where come all yahoo
And worship. Worship who? Ole nitty gritty.

But capitol of capital go bust one day,
And Delaware go bust, and corps go bust,
Amd Georgie sad, and him to Martha say,
Back in rowboat, honey, ladies fust.

—reed whittemore

Coming to terms

with evil shaggy

When Darwin say "Man ape"—not cool,
no teach in school.
Ze Bible say
man Image God, no way
he upstart ape.

But take good look all dis bull:
if man Image God, then fall,
then Image fallible;
but if man monkey chutzpah is,
is good biz.

—bill poling

Ze Reed Whitaymore

sore throat poat shaggy

Lez week ze poat,
een water colder zen he oughter, swum.
He dumb.
Numbed up, ze poat's voice frozed.
To dozing fren on bench, he screech:
"Voice frozed! Throat sore!
Cannot read one whit more!"

—mike dolan

For Robert Frost:

the great old guy

You were always old:
A prophecy fulfilled,
Comfortable suited, easy shoed;
Malicious like a witty, bright
Sort of Jesus Christ
Having shirked the crucifixion
To hang around to see
What might happen.

You were always old:
But damned god wise.

—peter van egmond

Fragment: for a friend who is, thank God, instrument-rated

It wasn't much of a plane:
'49 tail dragger, and would only do
ninety. But it got us up there

on Saturday afternoons. Breathing thin air
at three-thousand feet you taught me
pedals and gauges. I liked it best

the day we split stratus
overcast in that gray country
of solitary cabin and dim light

where motion stopped and sight
darkened and we pitched cockpit sun
against all of it. And won.

—bob wickless

steve budman

Ode to a rat (and his brothers)

i stalk the rat. he is ever running
his crooked patterns throughout the house,
knowing which cracks will accept
rat fatness, which will not.
he climbs down onto the ledge
just beneath the hole, slinging
in his long tail to complete his maneuver.
i can feel him grinning rat-smiles
so his whiskers just brush
against the edges of the opening,
but beyond my grasp.
from where does his strategy come?
with his legion of brothers he scurries
to his place behind the wall—
their billowing furs are sending chunks
of plaster to the floor of the cavities,
all the hours, all the nights,
all the time the sounds of their industry.

sometimes when i think of men at war
i liken their lives to my battle with the rat,
undeclared but waged. i liken their anguish
to my nights of snugly rolling,
into a ball, wrapped and shivering
with movements that send into air
the squeals of my bed, to confront i
in that suspension
each sounding scrape of plaster
that cleaves away
falling inside the bedroom wall.
i wonder if the old house still stands—
and know, secretly, that it does,
if not on the old ground, then within a cell i keep.
and though the rat and his brothers
still weave between the spaces in my days
and continue to bite into my sleep,
i know that they too, sustain me.

—hugh michael brown

On a theme from "Lilith"

Deep inside each of us
hangs a crystal bell
ringing, felt-hammered,
singing melody for ourselves.
Sometimes the hammer swings harder,
sometimes the bell sings louder,
sometimes the hammer pounds,
sometimes the sledging hammer
shrills, bangs
and the whimpering bell
shivers and, buzzing, shatters—
hanging in pieces, tinkling.
Her nerves are pinched,
grinding, burning in the cracks
and her eyes,
like the eyes of a horse
stopped by a ripping, shredding bit,
are wild with pain.

—michael bright

Attendants

Ripping the snake
from the reeds,
he whipped it
in great circles above his head—
cracking and snapping it,
then pulling it down like lightning,
crashing thick on asphalt.

His friends, from behind, watched him
prod the snake,
jerking back
as the snake-jaws unlocked
and opened,
opened wider than its neck.
And they circled above it as,
one by one, three small sparrows,
new hatched and ugly,
engorged whole in their nest,
were disengorged whole—
laid out
like a family of slimy revelations.
The boys marvelled
at the slender new snake,
at the wholeness of the ugly birds
and they thought it only nature
that a dying snake
should shove these from its stomach—
lay them out
like attendants
at his side...

—michael bright

Wolverine

Sit by the fire of a winter
evening, and curl against the hearth stones,
to pass the time with me
telling of our kills.

In a loamy forest, you can
say, a blue boar chanced to root,
and being stumbled on, was challenged

And ripped to pieces in a grant
way, one to be remembered.
i'll reply with one of mine,

About the yellow little
man of crafty eyes
who crossed my jungle path

But never made it past, and dumbly
lent his shirt-tail
to wipe my bloody knife.

Sitting by our fire, one by
one we'll top the tales as flames
droop into glowing coals,
until we fall asleep to dream,

I to be a wolverine and you
to be a me.

—alan goodhue

warren hill

Tents

1
Those trucks in the engine room
Of the Community Rescue Squad
Cannot know that Bedouin women
Sleep like they do,
In red silk tooled with silver and glass beads,
And that their men
Patrol the guys of their tent
For one last time.

I watch the last man
Of the skeleton crew
Climb to the upstairs dormitory
And late night craps.

If there were an emergency this late
And across town,
Could the rickety west bridge
Shake them out
On the other side of the river
Quickly enough to save
A suffocating child?

I will say I have faith
That it will.

2
When I was ten and in parochial school,
The nuns told me
That a saint named Blaze
Had saved a child from drowning
In dammed up breath
By dissolving the bone in his throat
With faith.

Once a fish-bone
Lodged in my throat at supper.
When it was out
I prayed to Saint Blaze.

Saint Blaze,
I want your faith.
I want to sleep in that eternity
That is under a nun's garment
And have her shake me out
Onto the bank of the living
To any suffocating child.

3

In 1191,
A scouting party for Richard I's crusade
Came upon an arab camp,
Murdered the chieftain's sleeping household
And was gone before he returned.

One child
Was run through the neck.
His breath dammed up behind the blade,
He moved under the garment of the tent
Into death.

—don cook

Invitation to return

to an accidental shooting

they want him to surrender
his life into winter
and fog-wend his way back down main-

streets strung with live wires
haunted to his touch

"so you are what is left
you
that we may have,

the graveyard runner
from the night of dusk shooting
when we shot for the bats
as they tried to get home."

—david tanner

Upon hearing that you are going to Europe and may not return

When we are born,
Our eyes are blue.
When we die,
Our hair
Blue.

1
I look to the mirror,
To the veins behind my eyes,
The only place where we can see
The blood dance in the body.
It has the same rhythm:
You are going to Europe. You may not return.
Around my tongue, I see
Nothing.
But deep in my throat,
The words are drowning:
    Do not return.
    Crossing the ocean once
    Separates sea and sky.
    Crossing it twice
    Is a need for the land
    I do not want in my breathing.

2
Last summer,
I rode the motorcycle
Off a cliff near Marseilles.
My eardrums broke,
I broke the water with my feet,
Broke into drops that stain
Anything but the ocean.
There was no autopsy:
No one found me
But blue flowers
The sea gives
At weddings and funerals.

3
If you do not return,
I will invent stories
Of your drowning.

Or
I will meet you at the airport,
Hug you, Crying all the while.
Then, I will find a motorcycle,
Slick back my hair,
Like seaweed,
And wait for summer.

—nancy marks

stanford barouh

Watching hail clouds

Some water we have failed to lock up
warm in our bodies
is coming through the air at us,
hanging white and frozen
before the black clouds.

Now it pounds it sticks
into the soil,
breaks against the fragile stalks
of our corn, clips them off.

The children are aware of
things undone and falling
in the muddy fields
behind the wooden house.

They run from our stung faces
to the front,
where the hail sits deep
in the dark, green grass.

In a metal bucket they gather the cold stones
for us to suck on after dinner,
for us to break down in our hot mouths
which will not be speaking.

—edward gold

Confessions

by jack meier

I still remember that house as I'm sure most of us do—a large wood framed house, white once, now a dingy yellow-brown. Surprisingly enough, it looked clean although it was boarded up and no one had lived there for more than a year.

Yes, I remember it. We passed by that house every morning on the way to school, even though it was somewhat out of the way. The older school boys always laughed at their secret jokes when they walked past and although we were younger we had definite ideas as to the meaning of their guffaws and snortings.

Of course what really attracted us were the rumors and stories that the house was evil. Why or how we did not know but we were twelve and evil was exciting no matter how or why.

Parents sometimes talked about the "goings-on" but when I asked what goings-on, the answers consisted of devastating warnings and threats. I got the distinct idea that my health would somehow be impaired if I ventured too near.

The details escaped me and most of my friends were equally baffled. The dictionary, which was a constant source of enlightenment, confused us even further. About the only concrete thing we knew was that the house was associated with sex—a word we had all heard and looked up but found it merely meant you were either male or female or had some sort of urge. None of us knew whether being male or female was evil or having an urge was evil but without a doubt sex was evil.

Some of us went to our older brothers. Mine would say little or nothing and I was scared he would tell parents that I was asking questions. The other brothers mostly laughed and said we were too young to understand. They made jokes that didn't make sense to us but we laughed anyway. Some things are just funny.

There seemed no way out of the dilemma. Certain things were evil but no one would tell us why. Even if they did try to explain it was always in terms we didn't understand. I'll never forget the time the principal talked to us about the evils of worldliness which were connected to smut because one guy had cut out some paintings from *Time* magazine which showed some naked ladies. The teacher caught him with them in the boys' room and called the principal. So she talked to us about how these paintings were evil and anyone who looked at them had better get to confession quickly because their souls were now in the state of sin.

"Now the most dangerous thing about these smutty paintings," she said, "is that they tend to arouse desires in boys which will lead them to even greater sins either by abusing themselves or hurting someone else. So for your own soul's sake, if ever Satan tempts you to look at something like this, make the sign of the cross and say, 'Satan be gone, I am a vessel of the lord' and the temptation will pass."

She left, took the boy down to her office and probably called his parents.

But her speech got us thinking again. Here was something new—"abusing yourself." My best friend Billy and I discussed it all the way home wondering if it meant whipping oneself like that saint did that we read about in religion class.

"Abuse means hurting yourself, doesn't it?" Billy asked.

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure," said I, "but she said you could also hurt other people."

"Are you going to confession?" he asked.

"Yeah, I guess so, but I'm kind of scared. I've never said anything like that before. Mostly I just lie and get angry. You think we'll get more penance for that sin?"

"Yeah, I guess so," he said. "But don't worry, you can say some of the prayers in church and then say the rest on the way home. That way nobody knows you did something real bad."

I was impressed with his thinking. "That's really neat," I said.

We were almost home. Billy lived three houses up from me and I had to wait at my front door until he got to his. Then we both raced into our houses to see who could change clothes and be outside faster. Billy usually won since Mother always yelled at me to hang up my clothes neatly or else I couldn't go out and play. And as the door banged behind me on my way out, "Be in by five for dinner!" she always yelled.

Five o'clock rolled around and I went in for dinner—in the back door since I was dirty and grimy and would track up the living room (which always seemed a strange name since nobody could live there without tracking it up).

"Wash your hands and hurry up," said mother. "It's a quarter past five."

So I did and then ran upstairs, said hi to brother and father and sat down. Dinner was usually fun in a way because brother who was a junior in high school always had a story about Charles who was Billy's older brother. My brother and Charles went to the same school but weren't really friends. In fact, parents didn't want brother to be around Charles and I don't think brother wanted to either.

We all bowed our heads.

"Bless us, oh, Lord for these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Amen."

We all said amen.

Father asked how our day was. I always waited for brother to speak.

"All right," he said. "Charlie really got one today. Father Barry even called old Callihan up..."

"Monseigneur Callihan," corrected Mother.

"Father Barry called Msgr. Callihan up to class today to see what he did."

"What was it this time?" asked Father.

"Isn't there anything the school can do to discipline that boy?" said Mother. "If he doesn't get beaten at home he gets beaten in school. Nothing does any good. His poor mother, bless her, has been in tears this entire week because of that..."

She stopped quickly and looked at me then at Father but my eyes were on the pork chops which I made a great fuss over cutting. I knew the story though. Billy had overheard his father talking to Mr. Grayson. It had something to do with Rita, Mr. Grayson's daughter, whom Charles had hurt in some way. All this made us laugh and admire Charles because none of us liked Rita. She was only three years older but she acted real stuck up. She did dumb things too because Charles told Billy who told me that she stuffed tissues under her shirt to

make her things bigger. Billy and I wondered how Charles found that out and figured that it had a lot to do with Mr. Grayson's phone call. Anyway, that's why Mother stopped.

"Well I would beat the boy until he couldn't stand," said Father. "If any son of mine..."

He glanced at us meaningfully and I continued working at pork chops.

"Anyway," said brother, anxious to tell his story, "he really did it today. He might even get expelled for good this time."

I was really interested to hear this. A few other times he had been kicked out for two days but this was permanent.

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He made some real juicy spit balls and then threw them at the crucifix so they stuck on it. Fr. Barry snuck up on him and just as he was about to throw another, he slammed his book against Charlie's ear. He hit him three times real hard and quick before Charles fell out of the chair."

I sat there feeling a book being slammed against my ear. The ear all red and numb and swelling and I couldn't hear. I wanted to ask if he bled, if being hit on the ear had made him bleed. I wondered if Fr. Barry would feel sorry if he made him bleed or if he would get even angrier if blood got on his book and on the floor. I remembered the time Father caught me near that house. I said no, I hadn't been there and he slapped my face. And he asked again and I said no. He slapped me harder and his ring hit my mouth and I bled. Red, warm, tickling, sliding down my chin. Father took off his ring, pulled out a handkerchief and wiped his ring and then my chin. He was not gentle. Then he took me down to the basement.

"Don't lie to me, boy! You'll only get punished more. I saw you and your friend up the street near that house. Now are you going to say I'm a liar? Are you, boy?"

He grabbed my face and shook it.

"Well, boy, am I a liar? Answer me!"

I had tried not to cry but now I couldn't help myself. Sobbing I said, "No, we were there. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, honest. I won't go there anymore. Besides, it was Billy's idea, honest."

He stopped and mother came and said not to hit me anymore. She sent me to bed after washing my mouth and putting salve on my lip so I wouldn't bleed on the clean pillow case.

I wondered if Charles bled. Bleeding was good. It made them feel sorry for you. It let them see they had hurt you. If Charles bled, Fr. Barry might feel sorry even though he had caught Charles doing a really bad thing. I wondered if Charles deserved to bleed for throwing spitballs.

"Then Msgr. Callihan came up and made Charlie go to confession and kneel in the hall until five o'clock. None of us were allowed to talk to him either. We expected him to get up and leave but he just knelt there."

"I don't suppose that did any good," said Father. "I guess he was born bad. God knows his parents have tried. His father is always up at church teaching C.C.D., working on the buildings, doing everything he can do."

Dinner was finished. We all bowed our heads.

"Thank You, Lord, for the food we have eaten and the gifts You have bestowed on us today."

Brother and I cleared off the table and then I went to do my homework but I couldn't work wondering if Charles was really expelled so I told Mother I was going up to see Billy about one of the assignments.

"Don't be long," she said.

Mr. Baxter answered the door and asked me how Mother and Father were. I told him they were fine. Mrs. Baxter was sitting alone in the kitchen and I hurried up to Billy's room. Their house was too quiet tonight and Mr. Baxter smiled too long at me. Even the baby was asleep. I knocked softly on Billy's door and went in.

Billy was lying on his bed. He didn't sit up.

"Brother told me," I said. "Where is Charlie?"

"Don't know," said Billy. "He called up tonight and said he wouldn't be home until late. The priest at school called up Mom and told her. She's been crying all night."

I didn't know whether I should stay or go home. It felt strange being there. Then Billy started to cry. He turned his head sideways so I couldn't see and I pretended to look at his baseball cards until he stopped.

"Charlie can't come home," he finally said. "Dad told him he couldn't. He said that he's caused us enough trouble and never to come near me again. Mom and Dad are scared I'll grow up bad like him."

Billy burst out sobbing again and I didn't know what to do. Now I couldn't pretend not to see or hear, and it was embarrassing to see him cry. I wondered if my brother disappeared if I'd miss him. He was the same age as Charlie but so different. Brother had not been whipped or yelled at in so long I had forgotten the last time he got in trouble. Nor did brother and I live in the same room as Billy and Charlie did. In some strange way, Billy was proud of his brother, he admired him. I lived in the same house with brother but tried not to bother him.

Billy hadn't quit crying. I couldn't go and I hated to stay. If only I'd stayed in my room and hadn't come here. If I had stayed home I wouldn't have to feel this way, I wouldn't have to be embarrassed, I wouldn't have to see my friend...

He rolled over and looked at me but didn't speak for several moments. I didn't know what he wanted to say. And I knew I couldn't say anything to him.

"I'm going," he finally said, "I'm going to find Charlie and find out what he's going to do."

"Where will you look?" I asked. "He could be anywhere. He might not even be in town."

There was a pause. Billy said nothing; he just watched me and he knew things I didn't. His look told me he knew where Charlie was.

The silence terrified me. Father always became silent when he was angriest. First many words and threats, then the blood left his face, his lips clamped shut, his fists clenched and there was silence.

"I know where my brother is," he said at last. "He told me where he goes when he is in trouble."

"Where?" I asked almost in a whisper.

"To that house. He said that's where

he goes because it makes him feel better. I know that's where he is."

He paused to let things sink in while I stood there amazed. Charlie was there at that house and Billy was going to find him.

"Will you come with me?"

All I could see was that tight white face and those fists. In one second those fists would fly apart, grab my throat and slam me back against the wall. That face would press up to my nose and the sweaty smell almost made me vomit while my own arms hung limp, unmovable, tied behind my back. And the mouth screamed in my ear,

"THAT HOUSE! THAT HOUSE!" it screamed. "THAT HOUSE! THAT HOUSE!" it screamed and screamed and screamed.

I could hold it in no longer. I vomited all over that hand, all over that voice. I tried to speak. I tried to say please, stop, you're hurting me, but every time a word formed more vomit sprayed out. Then I would be covered in it gasping for clean air.

"Stop," said the voice.

And so I stopped, choking, not moving, unaware of what I was supposed to do now. I had made a mess.

"Clean it up then go to bed. We'll talk about this tomorrow. Now hurry up before your mother sees this."

"But how can we go there? What can we tell our parents?"

"Tell them we're going to Thomson's house. He lives on the way."

I didn't know what to do. I wanted to go with Billy but I was afraid of getting caught. But how could parents find out, they wouldn't go anywhere tonight. They always stayed home during the week.

"Okay. I'll call home and see if I can go."

My hand trembled as I dialed the number and hoped my voice would sound normal. This was better than going home and having to look at parents. It was easier to lie on the phone and I told Mother that Billy's parents said it was alright if we went to George Thomson's house. Mother said it was okay but be in by nine o'clock at the latest.

"I can go," I said, "But I have to be in by nine."

"Let's go."

As soon as we got out of the house we raced down the street, around the corner and up the road for half a mile before we ran out of breath. The house was only three blocks away so we sat down to rest. Neither of us spoke a word, as if any sound would give us away. I wondered what we would do when we got there; what if the police caught us; what if they called our parents.

kathryn van buskirk

Billy stood up and began walking. I followed him. I couldn't give up now. It wasn't so wrong to go with Billy to talk to his brother. It was important to Billy and I was helping him. Besides, it was exciting. It was a thing that kids in books and on television do and all I had to say was that I was at George Thomson's house.

We were one block from the house when Billy stopped and turned to me:

"I don't know how to get to talk to him," he said.

"But you don't even know if he's there yet," I said. "How are we going to find out if he is?"

"Look for his car. Do you know what it looks like?"

"Sure, I know it. It's the neatest car on the block."

"Okay then, let's find it."

It was getting dark now and difficult to see. A gentle breeze whished through the tall trees, the trees whispered and waved their arms casting night shadows over the path we walked. Sometimes Billy's whole face was blotted out. I was walking next to him but it was hard to see his face. It disappeared in the shadows. Gone. Just two white specks shone out like car headlights far off in the night. His eyes looked like they were floating in mid-air.

Suddenly lights were shining a few hundred feet ahead. Lights, bright and powerful. It seemed now as though the night no longer existed. The darkness, the shadows, all that had been overcome by this one house.

"That's it," said Billy, "come on."

We started to run, not too quickly. There was a hedge around the house and we hid behind it. Several cars were parked on the long driveway leading from the street but none of the cars were Charlie's. We crept around to the other side of the house still looking for his car but it wasn't there.

We tried to peek in the windows but either the blinds were tightly shut or the curtains were drawn. Sometimes we could hear laughing and screaming over the loud music but mostly it was quiet except for the music.

"Guess he's not here," I said. "You want to go back home?"

"I'm going to wait for awhile. He might come."

"How long? I told parents I'd be home by nine. It's probably almost that now."

"Stop worrying. We left at seven thirty. It couldn't be more than five or ten to eight. Now just be quiet and wait awhile."

There was a loud screech of tires as a car came roaring down the street, into the

driveway and skidded to a stop. Neither of us was surprised to see it was Charlie's car because he always drove like that. After the car stopped nothing happened. No one got out, no one even opened a door. We watched the car to see what would happen, but nothing did. Billy stood up ready to go over to the car when the door opened. Quickly he ducked back behind the hedge.

Charlie got out, laughing and waving one of his arms. He went around and opened the other door and a woman got out. She jumped into his arms. We could see them in the light from the open car. Clutched tightly in each other's arms they started laughing again. Charlie held a bottle up to his lips and then to hers.

"C'mon. Open up," he said.

They both drank for a long time. Then they stumbled across the lawn still laughing and stopped for another drink. Charlie threw the bottle out onto the street where it landed with a huge crash.

"Hey, hey stop it!" she said. "You wan' to get up all locked you dumb dick?"

"Wha' the fuck. It woul'n be the firs' for either of us, would it?" He was still laughing.

Billy just knelt there watching, staring at both of them. I was going to ask him what we were going to do now when the woman screamed. As I looked, they were in mid-air falling to the ground. Charles had his arms around her and was tackling her; he fell right on top of her. Still they were laughing until he began kissing her. Their bodies were wiggling and Charles grabbed her head and they began rolling toward us. Now they were only about 20 feet away and I was afraid they would see us but he stopped rolling and kept kissing her. It looked like he was hurting her he was doing it so hard but she wrapped both her arms around him and started pulling up his shirt and pulling him down closer against her. I wondered how either of them could breathe they hadn't stopped kissing and she was holding him so tightly.

We knelt and watched in complete silence. Even though we knew it was evil, we knelt and watched. I almost forgot Billy was there as I watched and felt strange urges and desires flash through my body. Beads of sweat ran down my forehead and stung my eyes. I had to keep wiping my forehead to keep my eyes clear and I had to remind myself to keep breathing.

They kept going, on and on. I wondered how they could stand it. My entire body was tired just watching and yet I couldn't loosen my muscles. Every part of my body felt tight and hard. Quickly I glanced over at Billy. He stared wide-eyed and unmoving. I looked at his body and wondered if he was feeling the same things as I. Was he wishing he could be doing the same things Charlie was doing? Were girls really as soft as pictures made them look? Was there any kind of...

Charlie had unbuttoned her shirt! He pulled it off slowly. She didn't have any clothes over her things. Lying there, on the front lawn. What if someone besides us was watching? This was even worse than throwing spitballs at the crucifix. This was a mortal sin.

I wanted to leave now, to run far and fast, to be gone entirely from here. Home, even that would be better than staying here. We were sinning, too, Billy and me, just by watching, just by being there. But I couldn't go. I couldn't stand up. My legs were too stiff to move and besides, they might see me. It was better to stay here and not move, not do anything. Just close my eyes. That was it! Close my eyes, then I wouldn't be sinning because I couldn't see anything. Yes, close them. Close, please. And they shut. The inside of my eyelids burned. It seemed as if my eyes were on fire—hot, searing through my eyelids. I thought they must be red and quickly flung them open to the soft cool night.

Still they throbbed, banging against my skull as they watched the scene in front of me. The woman's skirt was up over her hips now as they clawed at each other. With one hand she pressed his head upon her lips while the other pulled his shirt out from his pants and scratched his back. Then he slid his hand in between her things and he grabbed and touched her and ran his hands up and down between her legs. Both of them were moaning. It sounded like they were hurting each other.

How much longer could they keep this up? It must be hurting them both the fighting and wrestling. I had lost complete track of time—minutes or hours. And still they kept doing it, more and more violently with fewer clothes. And then Charles unzipped his pants and he was naked. Both of them lying in the grass with no clothes on. Like the pictures we had been warned against, only now this was real flesh, real moans and sighs. My body didn't know what to do. Everything was rigid and tight and damp. Sweat trickled down my armpits like a thousand pin prickles. Inside my pants it was all wet and moist but I couldn't touch myself for my hands were afraid to move.

And I couldn't help watching them, naked, lying on each other, so savage and wild. Everything seemed so meaningless. I just didn't understand.

A cry shook the bushes and then my body as Charles smashed down on top of her, his arms wrapped tightly around her neck as his body rose and fell slamming into hers. They kept tearing and clawing and smashing each other faster and faster and faster.

"Stop it! Stop it! Please stop before you kill her!"

Everything stopped for one second and I looked at Billy, tears streaming down his face and his fists clenched. Then he broke through the bushes and ran towards the two of them sobbing. In that second my hands moved, then my arms and finally my legs as I made myself stand up and run. I ran fast without stopping as though some demon from hell were chasing me. I ran all the way home promising God that I would go to confession the next day and never think about evil again.

In what seemed to be a minute I was home and I stopped to catch my breath before I went in. When I started to breathe normally I went inside and started to run up the stairs when my father's voice stopped me dead.

"Son, where have you been?"

"At George Thomson's house," I said slowly, closing my eyes, waiting.

Then his voice came slowly and deliberately: "We called the Thomson's a half hour ago and you weren't there." A pause.

stanford barouh

Benediction: good friday

1
I am afraid
on this Good Friday
it will not rain. The dogwood
blossoms are out and
white, stained
only where his hands were.
I will not tell you
what color.

2
On Ash
Wednesday we smoked
hashish and distributed
the ashes, smudged on
foreheads to Remember man that thou art
dust and into dust thou shalt
return and into earth thou shalt
return and into stone thou shalt
and into worms thou and thou
rain return return as if
you are
dispursing

3
A slender girl
gave me this
pen—her eyes blue as the
stain inside a seashell.
I keep it to re-
member.

4
It is now the time
when buds burst the stone branches.
Some the color of that
cardinal crossing blue sky.

5
One Good Friday
at three
I drove thorns
into my chest and the
stain remained in my
teeshirt even though
it was raining.

—john link

Oxen, dirt, and other such things

"Boustrophedon" means "turning like the ox."
It is an archaic form of writing from right
to left, then left to right—like an ox
ploughing a field."

Stiff mud-jerked legs,
and squatted motion,
and heaving plough-
dug plot of dirt
and oxen.

The ox turns in the sun—
red-blood demon of
sky and field.
The ox turns 'round.

The ox plods in the glimmer—
shimmer of seed, rice,
harvest and sun
to pray to going down
on (shining) mud-caulked knees
the red-blood man.

And the ox turns 'round.

Boustrophedon—the red blood.
Turning like the ox—
boustrophedon.

The man.

—elizabeth ayres

Hamburg

Lines for an early German
settlement abandoned about
the end of the 19th century.

Ten minutes from the beltway, you stand
Off the main road.
You are empty.
I come to see you when I can get away
From the full towns that I know.
Your foundations, although sound, have been hollow
For perhaps a hundred years. At least
Since your insides died.
You make my insides feel dead too.
And hollow.

Sometimes
I walk through the trees in your living rooms
And try to envision your body before the fall.
But the fall is all.
Hamburg:
Your emptiness is four times mine.
I will take both back to the city
And grow new rooms full of trees.

—bob wickless

byron loubert

Unseen expressions

from distant wars

stepping off over the road
the asian undid his pants
.....& feces
he trudged back onto the road
doing his trousers together
with a rope for a belt.
american soldiers
freshly arrived,
watched from the rear
of a green convoy truck,
& deliberated the disgusts
with snickers.

in america
superficial sins
are eliminated with soap,
& disposed with the water drained
from bathtubs.
more heinous crimes
can be aided into oblivion
with laxatives,
& flushed from existence
to where god cannot even
distinguish them from one another.

in america
things are more convenient.

—reeve schlenker

1970-71 calvert award

winners

in poetry

and photography

Piedmont airport

for valerie

Through the field shanty's window
The light plane rises badly,
Falling dependently back on the tail,
Rocking forward on the nose,
Up, across tortured panes
of thin, blue October air
Until it drones,
Gone free over the roof and the bedridden earth.

I turn to the dark side of the shanty
Where the greasy air still sizzles
between us like the hamburgers
Frying in their pan,
So I go out and sit on the steps.

Those neat machines
Make a loud noise when they crash.
I have heard them leveling the trees
For miles and could do nothing.
It is never that easy with you.
When you cry, only
A thin bubble rises
In the part of your lips,
Breaks
And crashes back in.

—donald cook

larry higgins

harold lalos

Warrior, Black

Warrior, Black—
intense,
I choose you to grow through.
Prancing boldly around you
flaking away your shield,
I stand to your left
equal to your side glance
and trace the tear valleys,
measuring the rhythm
of your intensity.
In your shadow,
encircling you,
I measure myself.

—carolyn a jones

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